

GOOD Flipped Classroom CASE



06

Instructor
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Department
English Language Centre

ELC2011

Advanced English Reading and Writing Skills

Class size

22

Students

Year 1 or 2 from various disciplines

Details of Flipped Classroom IMPLEMENTATION

Why did the instructor use the flipped classroom approach?

Students in this course are tasked with extensive reading and text analysis. Unfortunately, a significant number of students are averse to completing pre-class readings. As a result, valuable class time is often spent on in-class reading, which could otherwise be used for more interactive and engaging learning activities.

To tackle this issue, Johanna introduced the flipped classroom approach, shifting the reading activity from in-class to before class. This allows for more focused and valuable learning during class time.

How was the flipped teaching approach implemented?

Preparation of materials

→ Johanna weekly converted the reading materials into PDFs and uploaded them to the platform Perusall (<https://www.perusall.com/>).

Pre-class activity

→ Students are required to read the assigned texts in Perusall, focus on key aspects of the content, and answer guiding questions provided by Johanna. Moreover, students are encouraged to actively discuss the reading material, share their thoughts after reading or express insights through the comment function of Perusall. This not only enhances their understanding but also fosters collaborative learning.

In-class activity

→ Johanna builds upon the students' prior engagement with the course materials to facilitate rich discussions, critical analysis, and application of the course concepts. For instance, she follows the students' discussion in Perusall, intervenes to clear up confusion, guiding them to probe deeper, and analyse content more critically. By leveraging the foundations established through the pre-class activities, she can optimise in-class time for higher-order learning and knowledge synthesis.

Post-class activity

→ Students are required to write an analytical essay and a feature article. These summative assessments allow Johanna to evaluate student understanding and provide valuable feedback to further support their academic growth.

What are the good practices that can be learnt from this case?

Using collaborative online learning tool to enhance pre-class engagement

- Johanna's implementation of the Perusall platform provides valuable insights into effective strategies for engaging students with pre-class reading assignments. First, Johanna uploads readings to Perusall, strategically assigning them for pre-class review. As students engage with the texts, they actively answer questions and collaboratively comment on the content. This dynamic interaction transforms reading from a solitary activity into a shared experience, creating an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives thrive. Moreover, the collaborative nature of Perusall boosts completion rates for pre-reading assignments. Students appreciate the opportunity to engage with classmates, making the process enjoyable and meaningful. With this groundwork laid, Johanna can focus her in-class efforts on facilitating rich discussions that deepen comprehension and ignite curiosity.

Guiding students to use Perusall

- At the beginning of the semester, Johanna dedicated time to demonstrate how to use Perusall to her students, including introducing the platform's interface, illustrating its functions, and completing some tasks together with them. By actively engaging with her students during these sessions, Johanna ensured that they not only understood how to navigate Perusall but also became proficient users. Armed with this newfound knowledge, students embraced pre-class reading assignments and participated actively in commenting activities, eliminating any lingering doubts about their ability to use the platform effectively.

Actively reminding students to participate in pre-class activities

- To promote student engagement in pre-class activities, Johanna proactively takes action. A few days before class, she sends reminders to all students, urging them to read and comment on the pre-class material. This ensures they are prepared for meaningful in-class discussions. On the day of class, Johanna reviews student participation in Perusall. For those who haven't completed the assignment, she crafts personalised emails, gently nudging them to do so before the session. Her tone is friendly yet firm, emphasising the importance of participation: 'Please complete this before our class; otherwise, you won't be able to fully participate.'

Johanna's "carrot and stick" approach leverages peer pressure to motivate students. The prospect of their lack of participation being noticed by the instructor often prompts students to engage with the pre-class material promptly. By implementing timely reminders, personalised communication, and upfront guidance on using Perusall effectively, Johanna consistently maintains high levels of student engagement. This optimisation allows for deeper in-class discussions and enhances the overall learning experience.

What was the impact on student learning?

Before implementing Perusall, pre-class reading completion rates were consistently low at below 10%. This was mainly due to a lack of motivation among students. However, with the introduction of Perusall, the completion rates improved significantly at the start of the semester, reaching approximately 70% to 85%.

Towards the end of the semester, as students became busier, the completion rate usually did decline, but with Perusall, it still remained above 60%.

The sustained high completion rates, even towards the end of the semester, suggest that Perusall was successful in enhancing student motivation and accountability for the pre-class reading assignments. This platform enabled Johanna to better support student learning and prepare them for the in-class sessions.

An earlier study conducted in 2021/22 with ELC colleague Ryan Hunter supports this. Findings indicate that a majority of students found the tool useful, and highlight how reading other students' comments and responses improved comprehension and helped students learn faster, as well as providing different perspectives and new ideas.

What were the challenges encountered during the implementation and what solutions were used?

The change of questioning skills in teaching

Adopting new teaching tools and adjusting teaching strategies can pose significant challenges for many teachers. During the initial stages of Johanna's use of Perusall, she observed that her students' responses and comments were often limited to simple statements like "I agree" or "I disagree". This limitation stemmed from her use of a questioning method that primarily focused on asking specific questions aligned with the curriculum. Consequently, students' critical thinking appeared to be restricted due to the narrow scope. To address this issue, Johanna adjusted her questioning strategy. She framed questions in a manner that encouraged students to express their opinions freely and engage in more meaningful verbal interactions with both teachers and peers. Consequently, her students became more interactive in Perusall, leaving longer and more thoughtful comments, and engaging more directly with each other.

Ensure consistent student participation in pre-class activity

In the context of a flipped classroom, fostering active student engagement in pre-class activities presents a significant challenge. While some educators rely on participation marks to encourage student involvement, this approach may not be universally effective. Consequently, Johanna has opted for a more nuanced strategy, employing the 'carrot and stick' method to motivate her students. By doing so, she encourages active participation in pre-class activities and re-engage absent students.